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ABSTRACT

The characteristics of an effective teacher are examined in Aristotelian terms, with the objective of developing a model for the training of university teachers which addresses Aristotelian causes. A survey of research studies designed to identify the characteristics of effective teachers indicates a logical approach toward training university teachers. When interfaced with Aristotelian causes (Efficient, Material, Formal, and Final), these studies suggest a new perspective from which to view the process of career selection in light of one's personal characteristics. A systems overview and suggestions for consideration when constructing new program models are included. (Author/MJB)

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AN ARISTOTELIAN VIEW

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> "Aristotelian epistemology asserts that cognition, like the universe, comprises two component phases: sensation and abstraction. All cognitive activity begins with man's sensation of objects that are external to him. The perceptions of the qualities of sensible objects, such as size, shape, hardness, and softness are conveyed by the sense organs to the mind, the common sense, as the raw materials needed for conceptualization. Man arrives at concepts by abstracting a form of these objects from the material content that conveys them to the senses. . . Aristotle asserted that knowledge begins with objects that are external to man. . . For Aristotle, all things are led by a universal natural law to realize some good end or purpose. There is thus an end involved in every form of moral action or physical movement." (Gutek, pp. 41-42)

In order to understand the true notion of educational enterprise, according to Aristotelian processes, four questions must be answered. (See Norton):

1) Out of what is it made? (Material Cause)

Since the process of education has become attached to educational "institutions" it is difficult to disencumber one's self of the concept of material as matériel. From a philosophical perspective, however, the Material Cause of an educational "institution" should be seen as the role expectations of the individuals who are collectively working to meet prescribed goals.

2) What causes it to be the specific kind of thing that it is? (Formal Cause)

The interactions of specific roles through the union of a stable set of interrelationships between individuals causes one "institution" to differ from another. Educational enterprise, then, has a different set of role specifics than, say, industrial, social service, health care, or spiritual enterprise. Although there may be some overlapping of roles between "institutions"

(or a number of subsystems included within the institutional framework) each institution should be easily identifiable through the interaction of these specific roles.

3) By whom or what is it made? (Efficient Cause)

The individual, considered as a total person, who assumes a specific role as a subset of his totality and agrees to apply a selective series of activities toward achieving prescribed goals, determines the actual "being" of an institution. The totality of each constituent individual comprises the Efficient Cause of that institution.

4) Why (for what end) was it made? (Final Cause)

The reason for the existence of an institution is the common end it serves; i.e., the identified and desired goal of the constituent individuals. The Final Cause or institutional purpose, thus, should be perceived at the "institution's" inception as it determines the processes which will facilitate goal-achievement.

Research studies, designed to determine the characteristics inherent to effective teachers, seem to be indicating logical paths to be followed (when viewed in Aristotelian terms) in constructing new models for the preparation of university teachers. When we look at effective teachers from the perspective of personal characteristics, teaching and interaction styles, and self-and-other-concepts, certain common qualities emerge.

A number of studies on teacher effectiveness were recently synthesized (See Hamachek) which included: 1) Hart's study based on the opinions of 3,725 high school seniors concerning best liked and least liked teachers; 2) Witty and Bousfield's research dealing with high school and college-level student opinion; 3) Cogan and Reed's findings dealing with teacher characteristics vis-a-vis student creativity and scientific interest; 4) Heil, Powell,

and Fiefer's work dealing with the relationship between teacher and pupil personality combinations; 5) Spaulding's findings regarding the self-concepts of elementary school children; 6) Flander's findings dealing with classroom achievement and attitudes; 7) Barr's discoveries relating teacher competencies to unyielding daily procedures; 8) Stern's review of 34 studies which deal with aspects of non-directed instruction; 9) Ryan's findings relating teacher expectancy with high and low emotional stability; 10) Combs' citing of studies which reveal findings regarding the way good teachers perceive themselves; 11) Ryans' reports of several studies which seem to be in agreement when it comes to sorting out the differences between how "good" and "poor" teachers view others.

The studies cited above by Hart, Witty, and Cogan seem to emphasize the importance of the Aristotelian Efficient Cause. For, teachers who are perceived as most effective are judged so because of a display of warmth, consideration, helpfulness, and humor, included as part of their teaching technique. Thus, it appears that the combined commitment of the totality of a teacher to his "institution" is of significance in helping to determine his effectiveness. In other words, as Hamerchek states, effective teachers appear to be those who are human "in the fullest sense of the word".

Research concerning teaching and interaction styles seems to reinforce these findings while introducing a new dimension. According to Flander's research, more successful teachers are better able to range along a continuum of interaction styles as opposed to those who use more rigid techniques. This leads one to assume that successful teachers have a more qualitative and comprehensive understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the "institution". Consequently, if the Final Cause is properly viewed by the teacher and is combined with the interaction of the teacher and his students as described by the Efficient Cause framework above, the teacher seems to function effectively.

Research describing self-perception (See Combs) includes several studies which generally support the notion that "good" teachers perceive themselves to be "good" people.

To take this concept one step further, it appears essential that in order to perceive oneself as a "good" person, one must understand fully and faithfully discharge the series of demands placed upon him by explicitly and implicitly defined roles.

Ryans reports a number of studies dealing with teacher effectiveness related to the perception of others. His research implies that a positive perception of other educational components and their roles is a significant factor in determining teacher effectiveness. Therefore, a positive view of the union or relationship of roles (Formal Cause) seems to have a direct bearing upon a positive self-perception which, in combination with other factors, appears to indicate an effective teacher.

Before answering the question: "What is an effective teacher?" a number of assessments must be made. If one tries to be too specific in delineating the characteristics of good teachers he runs the risk of having to categorize innumerable qualities. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to generalize in view of the available research.

According to the studies cited above, the effective teacher should: try to be "himself" or "human" in the truest sense of the word. By doing so, he contributes the positive nature of his totality (Efficient Cause) to the "institution" through his students; he should have a valid understanding of the goals of education (Final Cause) and of the motivating factors operating within his students; he should interact qualitatively with his colleagues and his students (Formal Cause); he must understand his role (Material Cause) fully and maintain a positive view of the union and relationship of all roles (Formal Cause) operating within the "institution" toward achieving its goals.

The task that remains is a deceptively simplistic one. We must look at existing systems of training college teachers in order to design new conceptual models which will provide prospective university teachers with the identification of those characteristics of "effectiveness" to which they are positively predisposed. The overriding objective, then, is to develop a program model for the training of university teachers which will enable them to evaluative their own goals, values, assets, and liabilities, in both intellectual and affective modes.

We have shown that it is quite possible to recognize the qualities of a good teacher after he has had a chance to gain professional status. The crux of the issue, however, is to design programs which allow for the recognition of competence potential and effectiveness potential at a point early enough in an instructor's training to allow for qualitative changes in career goals before he becomes "locked into" a career as a college teacher.

Many university graduate students enroll in their respective schools and, after a certain period of time has passed, feel that they have invested too much time to be able to change career pursuits in light of new personal goals without sacrificing their initial investments of time and energy.

This line of reasoning coupled with fluctuating supply and demand statistics may account for the vast numbers of instructors who have received terminal degrees but who have no concomitant desire (or opportunity) to pursue a career in university teaching.

At this point, the best one can do to approach a solution to such a pervasive problem is to suggest a hypothesis in terms of a training program for university instructors which will provide somewhat of an early warning system. In this case, prospective teacher candidates will be able to perceive and assess their own potential as instruments in the facilitation of student learning

at various stages of a sensitization process without closing out other career options.

Program Model Construction

When contemplating a rationale for the construction of a conceptual model, three distinct possibilities arise. Each of these possibilities is "systems" oriented and includes; a) a heuristic approach; b) a sub-system model approach; and c) an input-output systems approach. (See Klatt and LeBaron) Thomas B. Glans, et al, in Management Systems defines a management system in terms of the methods by which an institution plans, operates, and controls its activities to meet its objectives by utilizing the resources of people, materials, equipment, information, and money. (Glans, p. 3-4)

The authors compartmentalize the development of a system into three stages. First, an analytic study of the existing system must be undertaken to identify problems and to establish goals and objectives in view of the system's needs. Once this had been accomplished the new system can be designed. Secondly, after the new system has been designed its programs must be tested in actuality or in simulation so that the conversion from the old to the new system can be accomplished with a minimum of impedence. The final stage consists of an evaluation of the system's performance and an analysis of its operation so that it can be modified for improvement.

A truly comprehensive systems definition (in the generic sense of the term) is found in Instructional Systems by Bela Banathy:

> Systems are assemblages of parts that are designed and built by man into organized wholes for the attainment of specific purposes. The purpose of a system is realized through processes in which interacting components engage in order to produce a predetermined output. Purpose determines the process required, and the process will imply the kinds of components that will make up the system. A system receives its purpose, its input, its resources, and its constraints from a supra-system. (Banathy, p. 12)

In other words, the purposes (objectives) of suprasystems are to be met by the required processes (interaction of component subsystems) of the available resources (content).

The evaluation of a system's adequacy, then, can only transpire in terms of how closely the output of the system fulfills the purposes for which it exists. Further, the quality of an educational institution can only be assessed after its goals are precisely stated and evaluated.

For those acquainted with various systems analysis techniques it would seem that, in light of previously presented teacher effectiveness research, the input-output model might be the logical choice. This assumption would ostensibly be based upon the perception that since we have determined what our product ought to be all that remains is to modify initial screening procedures to adjust existing training programs to provide for the desired eventuality. Unfortunately, the complexities encountered as a result of the dynamic nature of our society (the suprasystem) in concert with our system of educating educators, mitigates against the adoption of this particular systems arrangement.

The major liability of the sub-system model rests with the [illegible]tion that sub-systems are often based upon common points of view within a [illegible] area of expertise. In this regard, our experiences inform us that when we are dealing with the "institution" of education in toto as the universe of discourse, common points of view rarely exist.

On the other hand, a heuristic system includes a set of principles or objectives which should permit the program to achieve specified ends regardless of the changes and conditions under which the program will operate.

Some governing principles inherent to the success of this model which must be considered are in the areas of; 1) the definition of the instructor's role in general, and, given specific conditions, in particular. 2) The conditions

under which the system will operate in view of possible contingencies (structured flexibility); 3) the functions of teaching in light of the teacher's role definitions; 4) the desired personal characteristics of the teacher.

It should be noted that in any event this program model must be directly concerned with the effects that instructors thus trained will have upon their students.

Aristotelian logic asserts the existence of an objective order of reality and that man's rationality enables him to arrive at abstract concepts through reflective thinking and practical reasoning. (See Randall)

An understanding of Aristotelian Causes vis-a-vis educational enterprise can provide prospective instructors with a philosophical basis which is a stimulus toward qualitative introspection.

Answers to rhetorical questions, although moot, give rise to new questions through concomitant deeper understandings. Such questions dealing with role expectations, collegial interaction, commitment of one's totality to his institution, and institutional purpose, can bring into focus an individual's perception of himself in relation to the "institution" he serves. His development as a facilitator of student learning is based upon the never-ending pursuit of such answers.

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